

kind you told everything to, absolutely everything. And in the end, you don't even know whether he is a friend or a brother".

"Or a lover".

"Or a lover," He repeated. Then he fell onto the bed once more, took a crumpled up sheet of paper from his pocket and read: "I can tell you I am willing to do anything", I say, "Get closer to me. Look at me, touch me, say anything. Or don't say a word, but come near. Don't be an idiot, don't let this disappear, go to dust, vanish. Soon, you'll grow older and think this was all so stupid. Before it all goes away, while I can still say yes, please, come closer."

He folded the paper and stuffed it into his pocket, crumpling it even more. We looked at each other. I didn't know what to say. He sank into the bed once again and turned to the wall. I went on listening. "I talk to you as if I were talking to him a little. If you could help, if he could help. It's all so complicated. I walk the streets and look at all twenty-year-old men, as if each and every one could be him. I feel things I don't really understand. I don't like not understanding what I feel. I don't enjoy dealing with what I don't know. I never felt like this before."

A gush of wind opened the window, spreading the ashes from the ashtray all over the table. He looked smaller, shrunken, on the bed. I kept on listening:

"I'm thirty-four, I can't feel things as if I were fifteen. You know how it is, we're almost the same age. How old are you now?"

"Thirty three," I said.

"You see, you get it. We are too old for this frenzy."

"You think so?" I asked. But he kept on speaking without listening.

"It's so uncanny to suddenly find out there is someone thinking about me all the time. Someone I don't know. And who's twenty years old. I keep picturing some crazy things, I can't help it."

"What kinds of things," I whispered, "do you think about?"

He slid his hand over the white wall.

"Lying down beside him. Naked. Holding him close in my arms. Kissing him. On the mouth." On the wall, his hand clenched and moved towards his body, resting between his legs. "It must be the North wind, this bright light, springtime coming, the almost full moon. I don't know, I'm sorry. I'm kind of confused."

He suddenly went quiet. He was looking out the window as if he saw something beyond the palm trees, something I couldn't see. I still didn't know what to say. I got up to stretch out my hand and touch his tousled hair. What if this fellow were not really twenty, I thought about asking, would you still love him? But I thought maybe I shouldn't say a thing. My hand stopped in mid air, I pulled it back and got another cigarette. But I still stood close to him. Closer, really close. It was another Thursday, this time in September, and ever since August, we were both very, very confused.

Romantic Cliche

Daniel Galera

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It was imperative to convince her that I loved her. That's why I avoided looking directly at her lower lip, jutting out moistly, at the gracious stretch of bosom her low-cut top displayed, that spot of muscular softness where her breasts began. Any inkling of excitement would ruin my plan. Because, reader, I'm no fool: I have read enough by evolutionist psychologists to know that a man's chances of convincing a woman of his eternal love improve dramatically when he is not picturing sexual intercourse with her. Devising proof of your love is an intellectual endeavor.

Camila drinks more than me, and focuses her sad eyes on the glass. As any anatomic masterpiece, she is a selective girl. It is not her fault. Natural selection has not yet been able to assimilate the significance of a birth control pill. To Camila's genes, it makes no sense to invest in an unproductive sexual relationship. We actually had a lot of sex in the first few months. It has been a few weeks since she lost interest in carnal issues and what is left are these sad, analytical looks she sheds into the beer glass as a way to force me to say something; to say yes, I am happy with our relationship; to say no, I have not been interested in other women; to say that I love her, of course I do. And I'll say it, yes I will, that's the whole reason I arranged to meet her at a bar tonight. When a woman is in a stalemate, you need to transform her hopes into certainties. If I can't fool her, soon some other dude will.

I will admit, in advance, to all these charges: cynicism, egocentricity, male chauvinism, selfishness. Problem solved, I now suggest the reader imagine Camila: she's hot, a little snobbish, and she loves European films that she barely understands. My opinion is that she could read more, but this can be easily solved with proper guidance. I had already started working on this a few days

ago, offering her the challenge of reading and giving her some good works, and also some unpublished texts I wrote (I am a so-called writer), including a short novel-parody about Lolita whose title - "Rupert, the pediatric gynecologist" - she described as "sick." Oh, and she sings well, easily reaching high notes. But forget all that, forget about the generic descriptions. Imagine Camila as an exciting collection of idiosyncrasies in form: she has delicious scars, a special way of yawning, beautiful stretch marks distributed with the necessary restraint (she tells me that she grew too fast), all sorts of charming gestures. Right now, she is stretching in a very peculiar way, her body leaning over the back of the chair, the back of her hands resting on her forehead and purring impatiently. If the reader could picture the right image, he will understand my selfishness and my relative lack of character.

Ok, time to wrap things up. I'm going to refurbish romantic clichés with a thesaurus, make it rife with figures of speech and assure her of my true love. Thus, she'll once again be certain that I deserve to fuck her. But before that, just to resume the conversation, I ask her if she wants another beer. " 'Course". My love, my darling. I shall say everything you want to hear, and more. I eagerly await for the day when the Earth's super-population will bring back our polygamist nature, when hedonistic sex will prevail over utilitarian sex and intercourse will no longer be a reproductive method but a celebration of life. I kind of like this idea; I almost suggest to Camila, "let's leave all this bitterness behind and celebrate our existence?" The waiter sets the beer on the table, and I, feigning some anxiety, slowly fill our glasses. Then, when I had just opened my mouth to express all my affection, she cuts in: "I'm pregnant".

Camila says this and then stared at me with watery eyes. She seemed to be begging for an answer that would express a minimum of complicity. I went dumb, of course, maybe for some minutes, and she took my absolute silence as actually being ... absolute silence. She picked up her purse with torturous slowness and left, her glass still full.

Dear reader, if we are not chimpanzees it is because we have the melancholic ability to cry alone during late hours.

